

Deaf Education Day – March 7, 2011

Deaf and hard of hearing students from the Des Moines Public Schools – East and Lincoln High School worked with the Iowa School for the Deaf in planning this event with the advice and help from Don Miksell, President of Iowa Association of the Deaf (IAD) and Suzy Mannella and Stephanie Lyons both from Deaf Service Commission of Iowa (DSCI).

It was a very exciting day seeing several students meeting with their legislators and interacting with each other. They were hearing, D/deaf and hard of hearing from all over the state from the school for the deaf, mainstreamed programs, and home-schooled co-op programs.

There were booths and/or information from the Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD), Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), Iowa Association of the Deaf (IAD), Deaf Services Commission of Iowa (DSCI), Telephone Access Iowa (TAI), Relay Iowa, Early Detection and Hearing Intervention (EDHI), Governor Disabilities Council - IDACTION, and Central Iowa Hearing Loss Association of America (CI-HLAA).

Deaf Education Day began at 10:00 a.m. People were invited to look around at the booths and read through posters that were placed around the room about the Deaf/HH Children's Bill of Rights. Deaf/HH students, adults and parents were allowed to add their comments to the posters before we put them up. (The topics of the posters were: Choices, Communication Accessibility, Technology, Early Identification, Accessible Information, Interpreters, Critical Mass and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Role Models)

From 11:00 to 12:30, legislators came and went as their time allowed, read through the posters, and watched four different skits presented by East High and ISD students. Other students jumped in, too. The skits were short clips of life as a Deaf/ Hard of Hearing student and focused mostly about their experiences in education. This was an opportunity for the students to visit with their legislators about their ideas, concerns and to share their experiences in their education. At 12:30, students from East, ISD, and the President of IAD gave brief presentations.

At 1:30, Iowa Hands & Voices (a non-profit organization for parents of deaf and hard of hearing children), IAD, D/deaf and hard of hearing members of the community, students, and parents, met with Representative Koester, Senator Soddors and DHR Director, Isaiah McGee. They discussed the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights. The main issue was how the state can recognize the unique communication and language needs of deaf and hard of hearing children and their need to have access to full communication in the educational setting so they can learn and thrive. How can the state ensure that the intent of the IDEA is implemented more consistently across Iowa's schools? The spirit of the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights is validated by the IDEA's "special considerations for students who are deaf or hard of hearing" and other federal laws including the No Child Left Behind Act. The question was how can the state provide the most appropriate services at local levels to meet an individual child's best approach to communication and not the child trying to mold to what the school wants to offer. Communication, like education, goes beyond a classroom...this bill recognizes that.

Kudos to the deaf and hard of hearing students from DMPS and ISD students for their hard work! They did a great job with the planning for Deaf Education Day. It was a success!

We want to thank IDACTION – Governor's Disability Council for sponsoring interpreting services for Deaf Education Day.

Here are some of the quotes from the deaf and hard of hearing students

Critical Mass

"I like getting together with my friends and chatting without an interpreter in my conversation."

"I like talking with other kids who understand what it's like to have a hearing loss."

Communication Accessibility

"I am quadrilingual. I can communicate using ASL, Signed English and Spanish."

"I know how to code switch between ASL, Signed English, and English depending on the situation."

Choices

"I decided to not wear a hearing aid anymore because they never helped me."

"I choose to use ASL to talk with my friends and I choose to use Signed English to talk with my family."

Accessible Information

"Closed Captioning is a little better. But some of my favorite shows do not have captioning."

"My teacher always prints the announcements, so I can read them and watch the interpreter too. I love using both."

"My toughest classes become easier when my teachers printed off their power points or notes for me to follow."

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Role Models

"Deaf /Hard of hearing adults are fun to talk to because they tell us stories about their experiences. They tell us like it is."

Deaf role model: "When I was in high school, I requested an interpreter and was told that I didn't need one because I got good grades." Years later I was informed that they wished they had provided me an interpreter back then."

"I like talking with deaf/hard of hearing adults. They understand me and how I feel and my experiences."

Technology

"Our technology has really helped us much more than before."

"I love using texting and the videophone with my friends, It's really helped me a lot,"

"I love talking with new deaf and hard of hearing friends from all over the country with my videophone."

"I hope as technology continues to change that they will remember about Deaf/HH people and how it can help us."

Interpreter

I appreciate that my interpreter tried to make clear for me what my teacher says."

"My interpreter really helps me a lot and she lets me make my own decisions."

"I really appreciate having an interpreter available so I can participate in after school activities."

"It's fun to watch my interpreter sign when my couch is yelling at us. I try not to laugh at her."

Early Identification

"My mom and dad found out I was Deaf at birth. A teacher started coming to my house when I was 3 months old."

My parents found out I was deaf when I was 5 years old. It had been hard for me to catch up."

"When my parents found out I had a hearing loss they talked to everybody about what options they had to help me."

Deaf Education Day Pictures – March 7, 2011

Everyone



Des Moines Public Schools



Hiatt Middle School



Home-Schooled Co-op Program



Iowa School for the Deaf

